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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001432

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SUBJECT: LY SPEAKER WANG JIN-PYNG ON KMT POLITICS AND  
CROSS-STRAIT

REF: TAIWAN 1413

Classified By: The Director for reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In addition to low approval numbers in national polls, President Ma Ying-jeou suffers from a poor image within the KMT, Legislative Yuan Speaker Wang Jin-pyng told the Director during an October 2 meeting. Despite his concerns about Ma's management style, Wang, a KMT power center in his own right, understands the need to work with the President for the good of the KMT and Taiwan. Wang expects to meet with ARATS head Chen Yunlin when the latter visits the island this fall. End Summary.

Long Live Chairman Ma? Wang Thinks Not  
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¶2. (C) Legislative Yuan Speaker Wang Jin-pyng shared his insights on the Ma administration and KMT leaders during an October 2 meeting with the Director. Many in the KMT would oppose President Ma becoming chairman, he suggested, questioning how someone who could not lead Taiwan could lead the party. At an operational level, it would be too risky to have Ma's low poll ratings, currently at 24.9% (see reftel), affect the KMT's chances during next year's county-level elections. When asked whether Ma could become chairman if his poll ratings rose, Wang chuckled and said Ma's numbers would have to return to the 50-60 percent approval range. Wang noted the disdain for Ma among KMT staffers and quipped Ma was "selfish" and did not take care of them.

¶3. (C) Wang also ruled out Taoyuan County Magistrate Eric Chu as the next KMT chairman. Even though Chu, whom Wang says Ma is grooming for the presidency in 2016, was born in Taiwan, he is considered a mainland given his father's roots in China. Having Chu as the chair would scare off the native Taiwan elements within the party. Wang also deemed Chu too young and inexperienced. Wang suggested instead former Premier Lien as a viable option and maintained Lien would not be too old for the position. When asked how the KMT was dealing with its aging leadership amidst the visibility of young DPP talents like Chair Tsai Ing-wen, Wang did not acknowledge a problem and pointed to the existence of relatively youthful KMT county magistrates.

Will Work With Ma to Get Taiwan Out Of Its Rough Patch  
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14. (C) Despite the LY Speaker's well-known rivalry with President Ma, Wang told us he would support Ma to help regain people's faith in the KMT. For example, the LY was ready to approve policies to revive the economy. It would be everyone's job to educate the public and help them understand the new policies. More broadly, Wang remarked that President Ma appears to be building his ties to the KMT by increasing contacts with the party. Wang noted that the channel of weekly meetings between the administration (Ma, Vice President Siew and Premier Liu) and the KMT leadership (Wang himself and Chairman Wu) remains active and offers an opportunity for the free-wheeling exchange of views.

15. (C) Similarly, Wang said that while KMT Chairman Wu Po-hsiung's relationship with Ma remains strained, Wu is not inclined to block the administration's policies and initiatives. Vice President Vincent Siew, who was disappointed at being sidelined immediately after the election, is also now being given a more prominent role in the economic policy process. Wang noted, however, that the newly-formed economic task force under Siew is primarily an advisory body that has no authority of its own.

#### Cross-Strait: Talk and Arms Both Important

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16. (C) Even though the economic benefits of expanded contacts with the mainland had yet to be fully realized, Wang favored faster movement on all aspects of cross-Strait ties. He attributed the low numbers of Chinese tourists to Beijing's desire to control the flow, in part because Ma had forced

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Beijing's hand by announcing the start date of charter flights without consultations. Although the DPP and others would protest ARATS head Chen Yunlin's trip, it was important to move ahead with the visit. Chen had expressed interest in meeting with him during the visit, and Wang would be ready to receive him. At the same time, Wang argued, it was important for Taiwan to maintain its defensive capabilities. In this context, he asked about the status of a package of weapons now pending with the administration. The Director replied that the review process was continuing.

#### What About CSB?

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17. (C) When asked about former President Chen Shui-bian's current situation and efforts to rally supporters throughout the island, Wang said Chen's actions made sense. Chen is trying to prove that he still has supporters and probably is counting on them to protest should he be detained. Chen wanted to meet with Wang recently, but Wang was unable to do so because a search of Chen's residence occurred the same day.

#### Comment

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18. (C) The ambitious Wang has long resented Ma Ying-jeou's popularity and success at his expense. He was beaten out of the KMT chairmanship by Ma and saw his presidential aspiration thwarted as well. That said, Wang recognizes that Ma's current problems threaten to engulf both of them if not remedied quickly. Hence, his grudging willingness to use his considerable influence in the LY and party to shore up the Ma administration.

YOUNG